

VZCZCXYZ0005
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVB #0043 0201335
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201335Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9836
INFO RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ZAGREB 000043

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV HR
SUBJECT: ZAGREB DAILY ACTIVITY REPORT: JANUARY 20, 2010

¶1. (SBU) PRESIDENT MESIC'S COMMENTS ON OPPOSING RS SECESSION WITH MILITARY ACTION: According to local media, in an informal chat with reporters on January 18, President Mesic said that, if Republika Srpska (RS) in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) voted in a referendum to secede from BiH, then the RS "would cease to exist immediately and I would resort to military means to (shut off the Brcko corridor)." Pressed by reporters in a subsequent encounter to explain his comments, Mesic said that he was stressing that those who are guarantors of the Dayton Accords cannot let BiH fall apart. Mesic's comments drew sharp reactions from RS President Milorad Dodik and other Serb politicians. Many media commentators in Croatia have described Mesic's comments as "crossing the line" and note that Mesic, who in any case has less than one month remaining in office, would not have the authority to make such a decision on his own. The Croatian government has declined to comment on Mesic's statements. (COMMENT: Mesic has made similar remarks in private for at least a year, whenever Dodik ratchets up his own threats to dismember BiH. Such comments have never before been made public. It is extremely unlikely there is any real plan for a military response to RS secession, but Mesic's comments do underline how Croatia would be under pressure to respond in some way to the possibility of RS seceding from BiH. END COMMENT)

¶2. (U) CROATIAN AUTHORITIES EXPAND BIOMETRIC PASSPORT ISSUANCE TO ALL CITIZENS: From January 18, Croatian citizens will receive biometric passports for almost all approved passport applications, according to a statement from the Ministry of the Interior. Beginning on July 1, 2009, biometric passports were issued to diplomatic personnel and were available as a choice to regular citizens applying for passports in Zagreb. Biometric passports will not be mandatory for all applicants applying in Croatia and at nearly all embassies abroad. According to the GoC, only a handful of Croatian embassies without the proper equipment will be issuing the non-biometric version; these will be updated shortly. Previously issued passports will still remain valid until their expiration date.

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